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ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

Speaker: Bro. John Martin

The Widow of Zarephath

Reading: 1 Kings 17:1-24

Well, brethren and sisters and young people, we tried this afternoon to set before you, the background to the life and times of Elijah. In that background, brethren and sisters, we tried very briefly, to trace the history of the grand apostasy, which came to its zenith, under the jurisdiction of Ahab, king of Israel. We saw that he was the king of the fourth dynasty of the northern ten tribes, and of each of the three dynasties which proceeded that of Omri, had finished in violence and bloodshed, and that this was a standing warning to both Ahab and Jezebel, that if they continued in their ways, the fourth dynasty would so end. And it did, brethren and sisters, it did! It ended in a melee of bloodshed such as never been recorded in the history of the kings. And a very grim warning is set before us, in the history of these times.

We had a lot of two major characters, did we not? The character of Ahab, we learnt what it was that made him the worst king of Israel, and we pointed out that it was because he had 'better feelings'. He had better feelings in him; he knew the truth and there were times, I believe, that he 'rejoiced' in the truth. He understood what the Word of God was; he exceeded to the things that Elijah did on occasion, and had he been left to himself or been encouraged by others, he may have been a different man. But he became Israel's worst king as we pointed out, because brethren and sisters and young people, when he was faced with the issues of life, and a person who was a far stronger personality than himself, he prostituted his conscience for personal gain, and to save face. He was a weak man in every sense of the word. On the other hand, we studied the life of Jezebel a little, and we saw in her, brethren and sisters, and we will see in future studies, we'll see in her, an absolute ruthless determination to practice her evil ways in Israel. A determination which we pointed out, had its admiral qualities, insomuch that she feared nothing, nor nobody! She didn't fear anybody; she knew exactly what she wanted, and she pursued that course relentlessly, and she overcame every form of opposition that was placed before her. And had it not been for the God of Israel, brethren and sisters, she would have, once and for all, terminated that nation. No question of it! Israel had never seen such a determined woman in all their life, as they saw in the personage of Jezebel. And a more immoral person you could not imagine. As we pointed out, it would not be in the realm of decency to point out the things that woman, not only condoned and practiced, but taught in Israel. Unspeakable things, brethren and sisters, that she brought into that nation, and had her 400 prophets,

eating at her table, discussing things that we would be ashamed to think about. And there she was, set up in Israel in that way.

We saw that the whole of the land at this time, was given over to this false form of worship. It had never been seen in Israel like it before, brethren and sisters. There were 850 men, dedicated to the worship of 'baal' and the worship of the 'asherah' or 'asherat', the goddess of fertility. 850 of them, and baal worship had swept the land from one end to the other. We saw that Ahab, had not only engaged himself in apostasy, but had gathered around himself, all the opulence and luxury of the court. So here was these 450 prophets of baal and the 400 prophets of the groves, who were gorgeously apparelled as we learn from secular history, when we read about their religious rites and practices. It was essential that they be 'gorgeously apparelled', that they may attract attention to themselves. This was some form of their religious rites and worship. And we saw how Ahab had built a palace in Jezreel; he'd built this glorious house of baal in Samaria; he had his own house in Samaria, and he had built somewhere, I believe perhaps in Jezreel, this ivory palace which was the pride of the nation. And everywhere there was this opulence and this majestic panorama of things presented by Ahab and Jezebel, and striding into that came a man with long, dishevelled hair down over his back.

A wild looking man, clothed in leather, with his rock camel hair's mantle around his shoulders. Elijah the Tishbite, and as he walked in, brethren and sisters, he brought with him, Gilead (that's what I'm going to describe to you in a moment). But, his name 'Elijah', (and can you imagine when he walked into Ahab's court with the whole nation halted between two opinions, who was God? was it Yahweh of Israel or was it Baal? And into this court walked this wild looking man, who was absolutely foreign to all those that were about him, separate from the world in every sense of the word), and his name meant 'my God is Yahweh'. And he declared that before them all, and there's no doubt about the meaning of his name. Not only is it correct from the Hebrew, brethren and sisters, but fits every circumstance of his life. When all Israel were halting between two opinions, there stood up a Christadelphian, who was separate from the world, and told all his brethren and sisters, by the way he acted, MY GOD IS YAHWEH ! And there wasn't any question about that; you know, we could go through the Word of God and just take the way people greeted Elijah, whether Obadiah, the servant of Ahab, whether it be Ahab himself, whether it be the widow of Zarephath, everybody greeted him in the same way. A man of God! He was known by all by that title. There was never any question in anybody's mind, that he represented the God of Israel. It was so terribly obvious that everywhere he went, he gave that aura about him, and everybody addressed him, either by the fact that he was 'the servant of Yahweh, or 'the man of God'. He was known by that title! As I said before, he had little else to be known by, because nobody knew him. He was of the strangers of the strangers of Gilead. If we take the word 'Tishbite' to mean a 'sojourner' because it comes from the root 'toshab' the Hebrew word which means a 'sojourner', he was a sojourner of the sojourners of Gilead, because the word 'inhabitant' also is from the word 'toshab'. So he was a stranger of the strangers of Gilead, an unknown man, except by this fact; we don't know anything about his personal life. One thing we know, he was a man of God, and it's

remarkable the way that people would greet him in that fashion. And I wonder, brethren and sisters and young people, that when we go into the world, into this wicked world, that people don't know anything about our personal history; they know by our very demeanour that we are brethren and sisters of the Lord Jesus Christ. I wonder! I really wonder.

And as the Lord pointed out in Luke chapter 12, (making those allusions for those who weren't here this afternoon), we pointed out to the brethren and sisters, that Luke 12 has, allusion after allusion in the lifetime of Elijah; 'consider the ravens', 'let your loins be girded', 'behold I have come to send fire on the earth', 'when you see a little cloud rise up out of the west', all these allusions in Luke chapter 12, and what's it all about? A man's life does not consist in the abundance of things which he possesseth and where your treasure is there will your heart be also'. Where was Elijah's treasure, brethren and sisters? Do you think he polished his leather girdle every week? Combed his camel's hair mantle? No, and what was he as John pointed out? coming in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'I am not the Christ, I am not Elijah i.e. that prophet, NO, saying less every time he was asked that question he said less. 'Well, John, what on earth are you? A VOICE, nothing more nothing less, brethren and sisters, than the voice of God. And do you know, when we read in the record, he was of the inhabitants of Gilead, ah, listen! If you know anything about the land of Israel, (I haven't been there yet, but I reckon I've been there 3 times already in vision), if you know anything about the land of Israel, brethren and sisters, you read that statement, 'he was of the inhabitants of Gilead'.

Now, look at Gilead, he came from over in this region, east of the river Jordan. Gilead, you know, was a remarkable territory; it was divided into three sections, north of Yarmuk, and then between Yarmuk and Jabbok here, and between Jabbok and Arnon. These were the three great sections of Gilead; each one had its own peculiar characteristics, brethren and sisters, but let me tell you what Gilead was noted for. See, Gilead is a range of mountains up here (showing on map), you've got the valley of Jordan which is a very deep depression here, and if you can imagine yourself standing down by Heshbon, and down here in the regions of Mt. Nebo where Moses was, you would look up at Gilead you'd see a long horizontal line of mountains, about 2,000 feet above sea level, but with the rift of the Jordan valley rolling off of them, of course, they stood up about 3,000 feet. It seemed that they were 3,000 feet high in a long horizontal line, giving the appearance of a great blue line, streaking up here towards Bashan and up towards Hermon. Now, when you get to the top of the mountains of Gilead, they roll off onto the Arabian Plateau. There's no dip on the other side, they just roll off onto the Arabian Plateau and from the Arabian Plateau of course, they use to get the hot east winds, but Gilead enjoyed the most refreshing climate because she also got the winds which swept down from the north, from Mt. Hermon, and it use to sweep right down along the heights of Gilead, and travellers have testified, brethren and sisters, of standing in the region of Gilead, one got the impression, of a revivifying freshness of Gilead. And the whole region was noted for wild, and not barren, it wasn't barren, but it's noted for its wild, undulating hills which rolled up onto the Arabian Plateau, and it was cut by these water courses which ran down, of course, into the Jordan valley, so you have in the book of Judges referred to as the water courses of Reuben, because

Gad and Reuben and Manasseh, of course, had settled over here. So here was a region in which these hills stood up like a huge blue wall. The hills of Gilead, and you had them rolling off on these wild undulating hills onto the Plateau of Arabia. It was a place of shepherds and of the Bedouin Arabs who wandered from place to place, brethren and sisters. It was a place which give a freshness about it. It was a hard place, a tough place; it became a place of refuge. Time and again, it was used in the scriptures for men who were fleeing from the wrath of others, to go to Gilead where they found refuge. David fled there from Absalom; Jacob fled over there from Esau; the disciples fled there at the destruction of Jerusalem, because Para was in Gilead, and it became a place known for the way it use to hide the outcasts of Israel. And you know, of course, we speak about the 'balm of Gilead'; Jeremiah speaks about the 'balm of Gilead' which was the sap of a tree, which had great, great healing properties, brethren and sisters. It was health-giving and the whole tenor of Gilead was 'of a place that was harsh, hard and yet fresh, powerful and healthy, and into the court of Ahab came a man of Gilead.

And I'll show you what the men of Gilead were noted for; in the first of Chronicles chapter 12, we have a reference here to what the Gileadites were noted for. 1 Chronicles 12 and verse 8, now here's the character of the men of Gilead; 'And of the Gadites' (now remember the tribe of Gad settled in Gilead) 'they separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains'. There's a description, brethren and sisters, of a man of Gilead! Look at him! He's a man of war, he's fit to hold the shield and buckler, he's got a face of a lion, yet he gives an appearance of speed, and goodness me, wasn't that Elijah in Israel? Look at him, here he comes down from the mountains of Gilead, breathing that refreshing breeze from the heights of Arabian plateau, blowing it into the court of Ahab. And there he was with a face of a lion, and gave all the appearance, brethren and sisters, of being speedy in his movement, and you know, he was noted in Israel. Obadiah said, 'Look, you tell me to go down to Ahab and when I turn my back, you're gone. The spirit of Yahweh takes you and away, you're gone!' No one could hold him, brethren and sisters, here today, gone tomorrow and back again, people looking over his shoulder, There he is! turn around, Gone! And that's how he acted in Israel, and he was impelled all over that nation, by the Word of Yahweh. The Word of Yahweh said 'go there', the Word of Yahweh said, 'go there' and he reacted on every occasion except one, which I'll point out Sunday morning, when he went on his own volition. But on every other occasion, the Word of Yahweh impelled him around that nation, with his face, the face of a lion, and his feet as swift as a roe upon the mountain, and he was in every sense a man of war, that is, a man of war in the warfare of the truth, whose weapons are not carnal, brethren and sisters, but mighty to the pulling down of strongholds.

In the 17th chapter of Joshua, again we have reference to the character of the men of Gilead. In the 17th chapter of Joshua and verse 1 we read, 'There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh' (now the half tribe, or half of the tribe went across to Gilead) 'for he was the firstborn of Joseph; to wit, for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead: because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan'. Now here

again, brethren and sisters, shows you what sort of person you had to be to survive in Gilead. Because he was a man of war he had Gilead and Bashan north of Gilead; now if you were to survive up there, you had to be tough, there's no pansies bred up in Gilead, brethren and sisters. It was the survival of the fittest there, believe me, and do you know, to this day, there is still remnants of the Bedouin tribes in that area, and they're as hard as nails, and you'd have thought there was only two types in Gilead, the quick and the dead, and Elijah got out of there, and when it says that he walked into that court I can just picture him walking into that court, and there was just like a steady stream of air coming off the snows of Hermon, blowing into the profanity of that court, which must have been fouled up with all the aroma of the immorality that Jezebel had introduced.

To me its eloquent when it says he was an inhabitant of Gilead. You study up, sometimes, the prophecy of the Holy Land, and the land itself, will tell you stories, and doubtless, we have to find out in a few days time, God willing. But the land itself talks to you, brethren and sisters, and it talks to me as we read in the verse that he was of the inhabitants of Gilead. I think that's eloquent.

Now, we want to study tonight, in a different aspect. Elijah had a gentler side to his character, as all the men of God have, and he has a work before him, of course, not only of destruction, brethren and sisters, but a work of restoration and of building up and salvation, because the prophets of God had to be positive in their work, wherever that was possible. Now at the end of verse 1 of chapter 17, he appeared in the court of Ahab, and he says, 'As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.' Now I want you to note certain things in that declaration. Now, we sometimes read scriptures far too quickly; he was making a declaration to Ahab, 'As the LORD God of Israel liveth', that was in doubt in the mind of Ahab, and in doubt in the minds of the people. As we pointed out, and we'll point out in subsequent studies, because the people were adept at calling Yahweh, 'Lord, lord, which in the Hebrew of course, is 'baali, baali, baali' they got confused in the finish, and didn't know who their Lord was. But Elijah knew! My God is Yahweh, and he says 'As truly as Yahweh the God of Israel liveth' and that was the first declaration that he made to Ahab. And he said, 'before whom I stand', and my word! isn't that a rebuke to the king sitting there in his palace with all the officers of his court. And this chap, 'look how he's dressed' and he stands before Yahweh the God of Israel! And the very terminology 'before whom I stand' he uses the title again later, and it's used also by Elisha, and the meaning of that title is, that before whom I stand, in the sense that I stand ready to move at a moments notice, in whichever way he wants to impel me, I'll go. And he did! never hesitating, brethren and sisters; and then he made a remarkable statement, 'There shall be neither dew nor rain, but according to my word'.

Now, this is remarkable, because later on, we read for example in verse 14 of this same chapter, at the end of that verse he told the widow of Zarephath that Yahweh would send rain upon the earth. There was never any doubt in Elijah's mind that the rain would only come at the Word of Yahweh. But, you know, there's a remarkable way in which he associates himself with Yahweh in the record. And as we go through we're going to see,

time and time and time again, how that Elijah always identifies himself with the work, so that it was impossible for Yahweh to act without His prophet, because Yahweh Himself had identified that prophet with His will. When I say 'impossible' brethren and sisters, of course, nothing is impossible with God, what I mean by that is, in the morality of it, Elijah was so bound up with the message which he came to bring, he so represented God, that nothing could be done without him. That when the rain was to come upon the earth, God said to him, 'Go show thyself unto Ahab, because I will send rain upon the earth'. NO ELIJAH, NO RAIN! So he was bound up with that Word, 'Go show thyself unto Ahab, for I will send rain upon the earth, and there would not be rain, He said, but according to my word. Now, there was a fantastic rebuke in those words too, that a man of that character who would look completely idiotic in the court of Ahab, and yet brethren and sisters, there wasn't going to be a drop of moisture until he was prepared to open his mouth for it. And away he went, and whatever Ahab may have thought about it at the moment, three years later, he was out there scouring the country from one end to another. He'd put nations under oath, causing them to swear that they didn't have Elijah hiding behind their door. So he was in a hurry to look for him and to get him, anything to find Elijah! because he knew, that with no Elijah, no rain. So bound up was he, brethren and sisters, in the purpose of His God; are we bound up with God like that? Are we sort of bound up in the work of the truth, that our presence anywhere and everywhere means the presence of God? Are we so identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, brethren and sisters, that God works through us, as if the Lord was beseeching the people to believe what we have to say, not because it's us but because it's God speaking in us? Can it be said of us that unless we show ourselves the divine work will not be cultivated? We hope that this will be the case, we hope that the work will culminate, brethren and sisters, when we are manifested on the earth with the Lord Jesus Christ. And so bound up was Elijah with this work, that without him God did not move! Remarkable man!

And do you know, he said, 'except it be according to my words, now you come to Revelation chapter 11, you see here how important those words become, because in Revelation chapter 11, I believe we have another clear direction to the life and times of Elijah. In Revelation chapter 11 and verse 3 it says, 'I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. Verse 6, 'These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will'. Now, look what Revelation 11 is telling us, brethren and sisters. These have the power to shut heaven. Who? The two witnesses! Now we're not going into an exposition of Revelation 11, but here is a clear indication of the importance of that statement of Elijah, 'there shall not be dew nor rain but according to my word'. Now, here is the witnesses of God in Revelation 11, and God said, 'I have given them the power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy'. Why? Because they had so identified themselves with the work of the truth, brethren and sisters, that God endorsed every action they did. He endorsed everything that they had done, as long as they walked in His precepts and as long as they upheld the purity of His Word, He endorsed every action that they had done, and they had power if they would, to shut heaven. And we learn from James that it was

Elijah's prayer that turned off the water. It was the power of his prayer that locked heaven! and he told Ahab, it will be the power of his word again, to open it, and when we come to the time when the rain came across the Mediterranean, we're going to come to one of the most dramatic moments in Elijah's life; I believe a glorious moment because Hosea picks it up, and makes much of it. We're going to come to a time when Elijah was hearing the rain; no one else could hear it; but he could hear it roaring across the Mediterranean and he got down and prayed earnestly that it might rain. Not that he could stop the rain; it was coming and he could hear the thing roaring, and he told Ahab, 'I can hear it Ahab'; but Ahab couldn't, couldn't hear a thing. But Elijah could hear it, he said, 'I can hear it Ahab', yet he got down, brethren and sisters, and he prostrated himself on the ground; he put his head between his knees and his forehead flat on the earth, and he prayed earnestly for that rain. And there was God and the prophet bound together in the purpose which God had to fulfil with that nation. And he had power to turn it on, and power to turn it off again. My word, brethren and sisters, what a wonderful testimony to that man's character, that God should so endorse his actions as he did on this occasion! And Revelation 11 testifies that these two witnesses had that power. Why? Verse 4, 'these are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth', and as long as they stood before the God of the earth, not the God of heaven, but the God of the earth, and protested against religious and civil persecution against God's people, then they had the endorsement of God upon their actions, and that's exactly the position with Elijah. He stood, brethren and sisters, in defiance of Ahab and his court, and God, while he had that attitude in mind and was witnessing for God, He endorsed his actions and I believe that we have a marvellous exhortation in those words. Not that we should think that we could go out and pray and it wouldn't rain; I don't mean to impress you with that, but I think what we need to be impressed with today, in this lesson brethren and sisters, is this, that we so act in accordance with the Word of God that we know, but not only are we performing God's will but that He is actually using us in His service to the extension of His truth to the glory, mind you, of His Name and nobody else's, that we become, as it were the vehicles of His manifestation and He endorses our actions because they are in accordance with His Word. And we have power in that sense to 'shut up heaven'; my word! there was a wonderful testimony to the life of Elijah!

Now in Revelation 11 and verse 3 we read that these two witnesses would have this power for 1,260 days, which of course is 42 months or 3 ½ years or, in the terminology of Daniel 7:25 'a time and times and a dividing of times' 360, 720 and 180 = 1,260. So whichever way you go, whether you read Revelation 11, 12 or 13 or whether it be Daniel chapter 7 you've got 42 months, 3 ½ years, 1260 days, a time and times and a dividing of time. It all means the same, the same figure basically, perhaps different periods prefigured by it, but you have this three and a half years. Now we're not told in the record of Kings how long that drought lasted, but we're decidedly told in the New Testament. In the fifth chapter of James for example, we are told the duration of this drought. James 5 and verse 17 he said, 'Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months', so James leaves us in no doubt at all that the drought lasted for 3 ½ years and also James tells us what Kings doesn't tell us, and that

is that Elijah prayed that it rained not; we've got his prayer recorded, brethren and sisters, for rain. We know full well that he prayed for it to rain, now, where are we told in the book of Kings that he prayed that it should not rain? But James said he did; James was quite explicit, he prayed to shut up heaven and it was shut; and he shut it for 3 ½ years or 42 months, 1260 days. And what does that period signify? Well, of course, brethren and sisters, we can't miss the point. I firmly believe, that whatever theories may be extended on 1,260 days or 3 ½ years, whatever theory may be extended to the brotherhood, I firmly believe that the lesson it teaches is so simple that it escapes our teachers. It's so simple yet so powerful; all we're being told, I feel, basically, is this that the 3 ½ years was the ministry of our Lord in which He suffered for the Word of God, and nobody, no single person, is going to get into the kingdom unless they suffer in like manner. Now mark that! and let's mark it well, brethren and sisters, because time and again we have that impressed upon us by that symbolic figure. It is I believe, the figure of persecution that if we suffer with Him, we'll reign with Him. And whenever you find that figure and it's given in symbolic significance it is always in the sense of persecution against the saints of God. As Daniel says, 'they shall be given into His hands for a time, times and a dividing of time'. The two witnesses, brethren and sisters, would be prophesying against the God of the earth, defying the civil authorities for 3 ½ years of symbolic period. The witnesses of God would be chased into the two great wings of an eagle, says Revelation, where they would be fed and nourished in the wilderness for 1,260 days. And it wouldn't matter where you find that number, it has to do with the saints of God living and moving and working for Yahweh, under difficulty, and Elijah, goodness me, look at Elijah, brethren and sisters, where was he for that 3 ½ years! Eking out an existence under hardship for which he had been well trained; eking out an existence and what was Jezebel doing? Tearing down the altars, slaying Yahweh's prophets, prostituting her face through the land resolutely, bringing about the ruin of Israel's religion for 3 ½ years. And there in the life of Elijah, we have a wonderful little cameo of the history of the world, as it's being projected before us, in respect to the saints of God. And the end of it, of course, was Elijah, racing before the chariot of Ahab into Jezreel, 'God sows' as the name Jezreel means, and Hosea picks it all up and says, 'great will be the day of Jezreel' as the drowned Elijah races into Jezreel before Israel's king, as the forerunner of the king the drought finished, brethren and sisters. And there was the end of a little cameo, by which we see that at the end of this symbolic period of 1,260 years the Lord will have come, and those who have 'suffered with Him' will reign with Him, suffered with, with, with Him, 3 ½ years. Not literally, but like their Lord suffered, we suffer and He suffered for the Word of God, brethren and sisters! He suffered for the things He taught; let's give up teaching the truth, and we won't suffer! But as long as we put before this generation, principles of decency, righteousness, and of faith, we will not earn their commendation, but the very opposite, and that's exactly the position with Elijah. And so we're told it was a period of 3 ½ years. You know, Isaiah speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ as a root out of a dry ground, and He grew up in that period. In the 3 ½ years what was the condition of Israel spiritually? A dry ground!

It was a drought, brethren and sisters, no so much a drought of water this time, but of hearing the Words of the Lord as Amos says, and so I believe in that 3 ½ year period we have set before us, that principle, if we suffer with Him; let's reign with Him! You

know, it's remarkable isn't it, that in all the exposition of God's Word, we unwind the Word of God and we dig into the meat, and what do we come up with? Some fantastic new thing? No, brethren and sisters, old truths, but underlined in such a way that we'll never mistake them; if we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him. And there was Elijah, in the wilderness, eking out an existence, but he was on the mount of transfiguration with glory, because he suffered with his Lord. He'll reign with his Lord, no question of that!

But you know, brethren and sisters, James meant what he said also, when he told us that Elijah was a man of like passions as we are. We're going to see some of those passions, not because we want to run Elijah down, God forbid, we're not worthy, brethren and sisters, to clasp on his mantle on his shoulders. Not worthy, not any of us, but nonetheless, he was human and do you know, his whole life was a life of education. This is perhaps one of the most thrilling aspects of this study as far as I've been concerned. It taught me, brethren and sisters, that God oversaw the work of the prophet, not so much that Elijah might come forth and vindicate God's name; of course, this was involved in it, but in all that work God looked upon the prophet as an individual man. As a man, He thought, 'well, I could use this man because he's a man of courage, he's a man of faith, he's a man who will do what I say, but nonetheless, brethren and sisters, I will look over you as a merciful, loving, heavenly Father'. He was ever ready to teach that man the principles of the truth, because Elijah didn't know them perfectly. As a matter of fact, we are going to see him down in Horeb in a frame of mind, which was absolutely wrong, and we're going to see the wonderful way in which His heavenly Father guided him into truth.

But even here you know, you've got the story of him going to Cherith, the brook Cherith which of course, was over here, I believe, east of the river Jordan. And then you have him going right over to Tyre right up the top there, to the place of Zarephath, to the widow of Zarephath. And in these two stories in the 17th chapter of Kings, I believe they're absolutely linked to together like that! They're not two stories, they're one story. They're linked like that, brethren and sisters; that Elijah's little sojourn at Cherith is bound up with the mission he had to Zarephath. And look, it absolutely humbles you when you come to think, that a man who could call down fire from heaven to consume the burnt offering, and call down fire from heaven to consume a man and his fifty on two separate occasions, a man who could smite the river Jordan and go across, brethren and sisters, a man who could do all these things, and yet, the whole of the period of the drought was given over to one work, one single act, to get a dear old widow in the truth! Now you wouldn't credit it; but to me it's astounding, that 3 ½ years were for no other purpose in that man's life, than to get one single widow woman in the truth. And of all the work that Elijah did, brethren and sisters, nothing could compare with that! And this the prophet had to learn; grand things are all very well in the truth, it's a very grand thing for me to stand up here now and talk to a crowd like you people, but believe me, brethren and sisters, when I see brethren and sisters working diligently and patiently with interested friends over a long period of time, and then seeing the fruits of their labour in water, I would give you 40 addresses like this, for a case like that! And that's the very thing that Elijah had to learn, that this 42 months were not going to be wasted,

brethren and sisters, and doubtless, when the prophet looked back at the end of that drought and what had been accomplished in that time. Heck, I've spent perhaps 12 months, as the record may suggest, he was at Cherith, and the rest of the 2 ½ years in Zarephath, what for? What for??? There was a woman in the truth. And the Lord Jesus Christ in the 4th chapter of Luke said this, brethren and sisters, and I want you to make note of this. This is what he said, 4th chapter of Luke and verse 25, 'But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Zidon, unto a woman that was a widow'. Ah, brethren and sisters, I can't impress enough the lesson of that! 3 ½ years, and do you know, I don't think anyone of us, before tonight perhaps, would have come along to this meeting, if we were to talk about the lifetime of Elijah, I don't suppose anyone of us would place at the head of the list of his work, the conversion of the widow of Zarephath, and I'm not concerned, brethren and sisters, that this was the major work of his life. I'm not saying that at all; but I do say this, that not one of us perhaps, would realize the importance of this. But you imagine that this man's life, in his lifetime, and he didn't have a long ministry, Elijah did not have a long ministry. It's difficult to say exactly how long, but it certainly was not a long ministry, and yet 3 ½ years of that are given over to drought, that 3 ½ years was spent in doing nothing else but getting the widow of Zarephath into the truth, and his sojourn at Cherith, I believe with all my heart and soul, was for no other reason than to prepare him for that widow.

Now, let's have a look at that! and see what happened. So, he delivers the Word to Ahab, and we read in verse 2, 'And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the raven brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath'. Now, a simple record but look what Elijah's got to learn. Now let me tell you first of all, what I believe Elijah's mind was basically made up of, because we've got no doubt about this when we come to Horeb, but I don't want to go there, I just want to tell you first of all, and we'll have a look at it later on.

Elijah was a fair thinking Israelite, no doubt about that. A Jew if ever there was one! But his mind also, brethren and sisters, was cast like the minds of many other Jews. That they were the exclusive people; that there was no one on the earth like the Jew, because God had not gone to the other nations; He had selected Israel. And Elijah, I believe, was firmly convinced that outside of Israel, there was no salvation, and that if anybody was to suggest to Elijah that he should go and save a widow woman of Sarepta, obviously a Gentile woman, it would have been the last thing that would have entered his mind. Now, I've got good reason to say this mind you, and therefore, brethren and sisters, to send him straight to Zarephath, I believe, would have been wrong, because God knew that that man's mind had to be conditioned for this.

There's an equivalent case in the New Testament, which no doubt many of you have already thought of; but his mind had to be conditioned for this. He was going to be sent to a widow woman, to save her in the truth! to get her to accept the hope of Israel, the promises made to the fathers. And God had looked around in all Israel, and it wasn't for the want of widows, (there were many widows in Israel), but ah, there was none of them! But, right over there, on the western coast, there was a woman that God wanted! A poor, old, widow woman. So, Elijah, you've got work to do for 3 ½ years! I want you at the brook Cherith, Elijah. So Elijah dutifully walks across to the brook Cherith; he doubtless went there, brethren and sisters, quite happily because he was going home. Cherith was in Gilead; but I want you to notice what God says about the brook Cherith. He says, verse 3, 'Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan'. Now the word 'Cherith' means 'that which is separated', not in the sense, brethren and sisters, of being separated however for a godly purpose. The word literally has the significance of 'that which is being cast off' and the record says, 'it was emptying itself in the Jordan' that's the meaning of that phrase 'before Jordan'. The literal Hebrew rendition is given by Young's literal translation as 'it was emptying itself in the river Jordan'. Now here was a brook which had been 'cast off' and 'it was emptying itself in the Jordan' and the Jordan was running down into the Dead Sea. I want you there, Elijah! Away he goes to the brook Cherith. And do you know, brethren and sisters, when we come to the river Jordan, again let the land speak for itself. You go through the scriptures on the river Jordan, and if you've got a picture of the river Jordan being a lovely little stream, winding it's way through banks, the other side of which is the green sward (turf) with the lovely thrushes on either side, leading up into the trees and the poplars, and getting a nice idyllic appearance. FORGET IT! because Jordan was a stinking, rotten, muddy stream, and the word of God never ever presents it in any other way but that, because the Jordan you see, is in an valley like that, and when it overflowed its banks, it overflowed all those little ridges. And because it overflowed them quickly, it receded quickly; now people on the Murray River know what happens when that happens. These banks as they were flooded in a few years ago, they flood up and recede back and what do you have left? Silt, rotting vegetation and stench! that's Jordan and it has been forever considered in the Word of God as being symbolic of 'the flesh'. Never, ever is it presented to us in the Word of God as being beautiful; the Lord washed in that Jordan, brethren and sisters, and declared it 'the flesh profiteth nothing' when He came out of the water, the Spirit of God rested upon Him, 'this is my beloved Son' because He had denied the flesh. Israel crossed the flesh and when they got across the river Jordan, they rolled off the reproach of Egypt in circumcision and cast it behind them, and here was a stream 'cut off' emptying itself into this dirty stream and running into the Dead Sea. 'I want you there, Elijah'.

So, away he goes! So, he's there, he's got a bit of water; Cherith is running along with a bit of water, not thirsty for a while, but my word, he's hungry! How would you imagine, brethren and sisters, that God would feed him? You know how He fed him; you teach it to the Sunday School scholars, why do you suppose that God would choose a raven to feed Elijah? Why do you suppose He'd do a thing like that? Well, first of all, because in the 11th chapter of Leviticus we have a statement concerning the raven in the 13th verse we read, (all the pages are stuck; can we do anything right?

There, that's a glorious sound, brethren and sisters, I might just mention this in the way of passing, that it's not everywhere in Christadelphian circles that you hear that sound. It's one of the most beautiful sounds in Adelaide; the pages of a bible turning over. Keep it up!) Now in Leviticus 11:13, 'These are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: (then he goes on to enumerate them) and then in verse 15, 'Every raven after his kind'. So, alright, the raven is to be held in abomination, that's one thing about the raven. It was an unclean bird to be had in abomination, nonetheless it feeds Elijah. There's another lesson however in the raven; in the 38th chapter of Job, we have a very expressive reference to the raven. It's not the only one but it'll do for our purpose; there's a very expressive reference to the raven in Job 38:41, speaking about God as the great Provider it says, 'Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for the lack of meat'. How expressive, brethren and sisters, though here is a bird, and you mark this, Elijah goes to Cherith. He's at a brook which means 'cast off and separated' emptying itself into the muddy Jordan, flowing into the Dead Sea, and there's the prophet and he's fed by a bird that he's taught in the Law, and furthermore, brethren and sisters, mark this! of all the birds in the scripture, this one comes, which is noted for this feature, that in the land of Israel it had great difficulty in getting that food. And the raven wandered for the lack of meat; and every morning and every night Elijah had to humbly put out his hand to get his food from that bird.

Now people say, 'well, it was the way that God sustained him'; but 'this was the only way that God could do it in the circumstances because Jezebel was looking for the prophets of God'. Brethren and sisters, Obadiah had a 100 prophets in two companies of 50, each hidden in a cave, and Obadiah, the servant of Yahweh, was feeding them. Why couldn't Elijah be amongst them? No! I want you there, Elijah. And Elijah would have pondered this, brethren and sisters, and I can well and truly imagine, that if that bird came to Elijah, that as a little child, Elijah was humbled, to think that the mighty prophet of God, the man who was made again to stand up on Carmel, and laid it down in Horeb to test a god, and say, 'I, I only am left'. What do you think of that guy? 'I don't think very much at all, Elijah, because I've got 7,000 people that you have left destitute'. And this had to be corrected in this man's life, and this was the first step in it, brethren and sisters. 'Consider the ravens, they neither sow nor reap, neither have they storehouses, but your Heavenly Father feeds them' with the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, in that very chapter He was alluding to Elijah.

So, Elijah is learning something; he's got to learn! And I believe, brethren and sisters, that he was learning that God was about to send him, to a woman who was represented by a raven, who was an unclean person because she was a Gentile, held in abomination by Elijah and found it difficult to get food. And there was the conditioning of that man's mind. Now do you think that's right? Well, let me point this out. The woman of Zarephath came from Zarephath of course, which is right on the coast, the western coast of Palestine. The Mediterranean seaboard, brethren and sisters, was always considered by the Hebrews, as being the direction of the Gentiles. For example, you have in the prophets the five isles of the Gentiles, and the west was always looked upon by the Jew as being the unknown. And beyond that they said, 'there's no power of

salvation', that outside the walls of the land, nobody could be saved. And the people on the western coast, therefore, very often were Gentile people who had come across the sea and had lodged there, as the Syro-Phoenicians had come across there and lodged in Tyre and Sidon. Now, isn't that remarkable? isn't it remarkable that Elijah goes to the western seaboard to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and there was another man called Peter who was sent to Caesarea, right on the western seaboard, what to do, brethren and sisters? To preach to the first Gentile convert; not the first Gentile convert in that sense, because there were other Gentiles, but the first official convert to the truth out of Gentilism, and how was Peter prepared for that? by a great sheet let down out of heaven in which there were all manner of unclean beasts, mark you! that that mind which was steeped in Jewish law and tradition might be conditioned with the fact that God is far more merciful and the truth far more expansive, than Peter and Elijah ever imagined!

And there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, but unto none of them was the prophet sent, and the Word of Yahweh came to him, 'Get thee unto Sarephath'. Now you come back and have a look at this; it's beautiful, brethren and sisters, the way this man was conditioned for this mission he had with this woman. And look at the importance of preaching the truth and saving people that we have in this record. You know, we would remember Elijah, I suppose, more than anything else for the people that he destroyed, and you know, I believe, brethren and sisters, that we are to go away from this camp remembering the people he saved, and the widow woman was one of them. 'Now, says God, arise, and get thee to Zarephath' in verse 9, (now I've thought of five powerful reasons why Elijah should disregard that command, all of them based upon the flesh. No wonder I thought of them! but they're powerful reasons, now let me give them to you)!

1. It was a long journey, brethren and sisters. He had to go from this region right up to Zarephath, about a hundred miles, and it was in a time of extreme drought. So that was one good reason why he shouldn't go.

2. The second reason, I believe, was even more powerful. Zarephath was next to Zidon, which was the hometown of Jezebel. The hometown of Jezebel! She was daughter of Eth-baal, king of the Zidonians. He had to go right into the jaws of the lion. A mighty reason for not going to Zarephath. I see no man going and very few women!

3. The third reason, brethren and sisters, would have been obvious. Why? The woman's an idolator; she obviously would be an idolator in that direction. Why should I go to her?

4. The fourth reason, I believe, had tremendous weight. 'I have commanded a widow woman to sustain thee'. A Gentile woman! to sustain me? And you look through the scriptures on widows; they're used in the scriptures as 'being the very object of God's care, because they have no one to sustain them. Number 4 reason was powerful.

And number 5 reason was this I believe, 5. How would I find her? because God didn't say anything about directions. He said, 'I have commanded a widow woman to sustain

you'. Well, Elijah would have thought that Zidon is a long way away; I wouldn't know her if I saw her.

So there are his five good reasons, I believe, according to the flesh, why it was a long journey in the time of drought, and my goodness, Jezebel came from that district. The woman would be an idolator anyway, why waste my time. What can a widow woman do to sustain me? and lastly, I'd never get over it! But you know, brethren and sisters, he never gave any of those reasons, it just says 'he arose and went to Zarephath' .

Do you know where he found her? Right at the gate of the city! He found her right in the gate of the city, picking up two sticks. Goodness me! look, there she is, right in the gate of that city. He found the woman, so that #5 objection didn't apply. And how could he say, brethren and sisters, what could that woman do to sustain me? when God could have said, Elijah, please; that little black bird over there! But, look, it's just idiotic to reason if he would have done; but he didn't. He arose and went to Zarephath! but I believe, brethren and sisters, his mind was so conditioned that none of those objections would be valid, and it says in verse 10, 'So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman'.

Now Rotheram renders that 'when he came to the gate of the city, lo, the widow woman was gathering two sticks'; now, God had commanded this widow woman to sustain Elijah, do you think then, brethren and sisters, that God sent a little message, that she would be expecting Elijah in a fortnight and please put him up? You see, this is the whole point, God had commanded that widow woman; now, how did He command her? Well, this we know that Elijah never introduced himself; he asked her two questions, at the second question, the second request that he made, she turned to him and said, 'As the LORD thy God liveth'. Who told her that? Certainly not Elijah; she turned to him and said, 'As Yahweh thy God lives'. Now that woman's mind had been conditioned, brethren and sisters, by some circumstance. What made her make a statement like that? You consider the implications in that statement. You take the implications; the implication is this, that he was a servant of Yahweh, and #2. that Yahweh lived and she lives in Zarephath, right in the seat of Jezebel's territory; and the whole of Israel was tottering between two opinions as to who was God? And here's this poor, destitute widow woman, who believed that God lived, and I believe, that implicit upon that implication, is this fact, that if she believed that Elijah was God's prophet and she believed that Yahweh was living, she must have believed, brethren and sisters, that he was the cause of the drought. Who taught her all that? 'No man can come to Me except the Father draw him', said Jesus, and I believe that in some circumstances in life, not that God's got a mysterious commandment for that woman, but by the very circumstances of life, operating upon the poor, simple mind of that dear old lady, she came to that conclusion, that it was the God of Israel. And wouldn't that story be told around Zidon! Wouldn't it be told in Zidon about how Jezebel the princess of Astarta, the princess who had been so prominent in that city, had been withstood by this man Elijah, and that he had the audacity to say, that 'according to his word it wouldn't rain'. But, my word, it didn't rain! and somebody saw the logic of that; somebody saw the logic of simplicity, brethren and sisters. They saw the simplicity that was in the truth! and she

acknowledged it, and now comes the most moving, I believe, section in the life of Elijah.

We read in verse 10 that 'he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink'. Now try and get the picture, try and get the picture! You see this dear old woman stooping down, picking up two miserable little sticks. The misery of her state, brethren and sisters, heart broken! heart broken with those two miserable little sticks. That's all she needed because she had so precious little left in her home, that two sticks were well and truly enough to cook it; and lying inside on his bed was a boy, panting his life out, starving to death, and she was there to cook the last little thing that she had and never for a moment did she doubt that God of Israel had done this. And you never ever find her in this record accusing God of any unrighteousness. You don't find one single word coming from her lips that accuses the God of Israel of unrighteousness. All she said was that I'm the sinner. That's all she said, she never accused Him, He took away the life of her son and she still said, 'my sin is brought to remembrance'. Now, that woman had been conditioned, brethren and sisters, and I don't believe, there was a greater work that Elijah could be doing at this moment than for that dear old lady. And that really is one of the most powerful exhortations in the truth! There's a wonderful work to be done in the truth, believe me, and because, brethren and sisters, it doesn't bring with it the aura of glory in hand, jokes and pats on the back, and all this sort of palavra, it goes undone in the truth! But this prophet didn't hesitate to stoop to this menial task, brethren and sisters. It was the life of a dear old lady, at stake, and the God of Israel saw in her, something He never saw in any other single widow in that nation.

Now, he says, 'Go and get me a drink of water'. WATER! She never said, 'what are you talking about? She just went and got him a drink of water. You know it's remarkable when you look at this place, and he's telling her to get a drink of water. That's what the Lord Jesus Christ told the woman of Samaria; this was his opening, 'give me a drink of water'. And she was a Gentile, a Samaritan, half a Jew, but that was his opening to her, 'give me a drink of water'. Now isn't it remarkable, brethren and sisters, that here is a lady, she dwells in Zarephath, which is next to Zidon. Do you know what Zidon means 'catching fish'; that's the meaning of the name, 'catching fish'. What was Elijah doing there? 'I'll make you fishers of men'. What does Zarephath mean? It means, brethren and sisters, 'the place of a smelting furnace', and if ever a woman was put through a trial of faith, this woman was. Now here's Elijah there to catch fish and the principle which is going to apply was, the principle of trial of faith. Get me some water, so alright, the woman turns around and goes off to get a drink of water, and the record says and I think it's eloquent, 'as she was going'. She responded; so when Elijah saw her turn around and to go and get that drink of water, he said, 'Oh, by the way, bring a morsel of bread in your hand'. Now this is different, the trial of faith gets harder, brethren and sisters. Water was difficult enough, you bear this in mind. This man is a perfect stranger, and inside is her only beloved son who is perishing for the lack of necessities of life; water's difficult enough, she responds nonetheless, she turns to go into that city to get that water, but now comes a grueling test! 'Bring me a morsel of bread', the poor woman stopped in her tracks, 'As the LORD thy God liveth, I've got a handful of meal

and a little bit of oil', and Elijah knew that that was true. He knew that it was true, brethren and sisters. She didn't say that she wouldn't give it to him, but quite plainly she was sure of herself; that's all she had, and do you know, how expressive it is, she had a handful of meal and a little bit of oil. Now the Enfield members who are here, know exactly what that means! They've all been through the Law of Moses, and they'll know straight away what that means, because a handful of meal with a little bit of oil was the minchah offering that the people of Israel offered to Yahweh in acknowledgment that He brings all blessings. And all God asked was the meal offering, a handful of meal and a little bit of oil mixed together, with the added incense of prayer, that they might acknowledge to Him that of the abundance of life, in the little bit that they could give Him, they were virtually saying in the tenth part, that all belonged to Yahweh. What Elijah was demanding of this woman, brethren and sisters, was not greediness, he could do without that handful of meal, this man could live on the smell of an oily rag; he was a man of the desert. He wasn't demanding of her that meal, brethren and sisters, because he was greedy and because he wanted that meal, but he wanted that woman to see this fact, that if she wasn't prepared to acknowledge that everything was coming from Yahweh, then he could proceed no further.

But the woman wanted reassurance; and do you know, brethren and sisters, one of the most remarkable references you have is in Malachi chapter 1 and verse 11, on this very point of the handful of meal and the little bit of oil. It was the meal offering of acknowledgement that all comes from God. Malachi 1:11, Malachi says, 'For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure (minchah= which is a handful of meal or oil), a pure offering for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of armies', and that's exactly what this Elijah wanted this woman to acknowledge. You acknowledge this and you're on the way to the kingdom of God, but my word, brethren and sisters, think of the torment in that woman's mind! You imagine it, and how often is it that you and I are called upon to make decisions of this nature? If you say in your mind to me now, that you can't remember being called upon to make decisions of this nature, then you stand self-condemned, because that you've never been asked in this life, to give up something for God, to acknowledge, brethren and sisters, that everything you have belongs to Him; and you stand self-condemned. And this woman, she would have been in torment of mind, 'goodness, I don't mind the water, but doesn't he understand that the boy is dying? Doesn't he know that? Of course he knew it! Doesn't he know that's all I've got? Of course he knew it, brethren and sisters, but acknowledge that all comes from God, and salvation was at your door!

And he said to her, 'Fear not, verse 13, go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, note that! but make me thereof a little cake first'. Fear not; would you make him a little cake first? You know, brethren and sisters, she answered that challenge, and she found her salvation of Yahweh, and she became a sister in the truth, and if the record of scripture means anything, the widow of Zarephath will be in the kingdom. IN THE KINGDOM WITH ETERNAL LIFE, because she tried. Now you come over to the 7th chapter of Mark, in verse 23, having spoken of the lust of the flesh,

He said, 'All these evil things come from within, and defile the man'. I quote that verse, in order to tell you the setting of this story. The Lord Jesus Christ has just shown to His disciples, that defilement, brethren and sisters, is not according to the Law; it's not that we must not eat without washing our hands as the Pharisees, or washing the outside of the cup and the platter, Jesus said, that the things which come from within are the things that defile us. So He's teaching the disciples that defilement was not as they understood it, ceremonial but moral, 'and from thence he arose, and went into the border of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: The woman was a Greek, a Syro-phenician by nation'. She was of the same nationality as the widow of Zarephath, and lived in exactly the same locality.

What do you imagine the Lord would have thought about, when that woman came in, and he was up there in Zarephath? He couldn't help but think of Elijah! It would have been impossible for Him to put Elijah out of his mind, when He was in the very same locality with the very selfsame woman of the same nation, and this woman has a daughter who's sick on the point of death. And what does the Lord demand of her, brethren and sisters? ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OR NOTHING! Now then, look at it! She said, 'she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled' (make me a little cake first): for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs'. Jesus called her 'a dog!' and so she belonged to that race of people outside the pale of salvation, immersed in the idolatries of heathenism, brethren and sisters, filled up with the idolatries and immoralities of the world. She belonged to that race of people, who were looked upon by the Jew, and rightly so in some respects, as dogs. And Jesus called her a dog; He said, 'you want salvation for your daughter, and in His mind, of course, His mind would be turning over, so did the widow of Zarephath, salvation for her and her son. What were Elijah's conditions? Make me, representative of Israel, a little cake first! Let the children first be filled, the dogs next! She said, I ACKNOWLEDGE IT; LORD, I AM A DOG. I FULLY ACKNOWLEDGE IT, BUT I AM PREPARED LORD, TO EAT THE CRUMBS THAT DROP FROM ISRAEL'S TABLE. What a remarkable statement, brethren and sisters, like the widow of Zarephath; Alright, Elijah, I know it's the last thing I've got, but I BELIEVE THAT THE GOD OF ISRAEL WILL PROVIDE! She found salvation and so did that woman. 'Your faith was great', He said to her; Your faith is great; your daughter's healed! What a remarkable thing, brethren and sisters, we have in the record of Elijah. Look at the food for thought it provided for the Lord Jesus Christ, as it provides it for us!

Come with me back to that record, and see what this woman did. A wonderful woman! We read for example, in verse 14, 'For thus saith Yahweh God of Israel' (notice how Elijah makes it quite clear as to where the truth of the matter lies), 'For thus saith Yahweh God of Israel, (in contradiction to the god of the Syro-phenicians), 'the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that Yahweh sendeth rain upon the earth. AND SHE WENT and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not,

neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of Yahweh, which he spake by Elijah'. And do you know, we haven't got time now, brethren and sisters, but I could take you to the prophet Joel. You know, Joel presents to us two thoughts, that apostacy would remove the blessings of the rain of heaven, and would of course, by implication, remove the meal offering out of the temple. No rain, no meal offering! But he points out, rend your hearts and not your garments and God will give you a meal offering. And that's exactly what happened here. When all the rest of the land languished under the drought because of apostacy, and the meal offering was taken away from the courts of Yahweh, that woman never lacked it. Now, here we are; it's not simply that she was eating food, brethren and sisters, she was eating the very means of acknowledgement that God was the God of Israel; but she never went without it. Because she had faith, and then something dreadful happened, and you see it happened because the woman had not been fully converted. There was still something; she needed that final conversion; she lived in a place called the place of the smelting furnaces - Zarephath. She had to go through a fiery trial, brethren and sisters, and look at the fiery trial.

Verse 17, 'And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick: and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him'. He died, because the word 'breath' there, 'neshamah' the breath of life was no longer left in him. He died; and can you imagine, brethren and sisters, the torment of mind. How often is it, (and a brother was only speaking to me tonight, that you often go back over the events in your life, and say what was the reason for this)? We seem to be doing everything alright; we went through a trial and we gritted our teeth, we got down to the Word of God, we made earnest prayer on the matter. God answered our prayer, everything went swimmingly, and then all of a sudden, TRAGEDY! and what a shadow when it happened? Has it happened to you? TRAGEDY! well, we say to ourselves, look, was it the answer of prayer? And the son of the woman (and I want you to notice this) the son of the woman, the mistress of the house; why did God call her that? Now this is a remarkable fact, that that word 'mistress' in the Hebrew is the word 'baalah' and the word 'baal', of course, is a word which means 'possessor' and really, the word 'baalah' means 'the possessor of the house'. But do you know, that word only occurs in two other places in the scripture, once in the prophecy of Nahum, when speaking of Nineveh it called her the 'mistress of witchcraft' (baalah of witchcraft) and the only other accounts in the Hebrew word is in the book of Samuel when it speaks about the 'witch of Endor', that she hath a familiar spirit; the words 'she hath' is (baalah, she possessed a familiar spirit). So here was the mistress of witchcraft in Nahum, and there was the witch of Endor in the book of Samuel, and this woman, still, brethren and sisters, was the baalah of the house. She still was not fully convinced; faith she had but she was wavering. There had to be that fiery trial, and so she appeals, 'What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance', and in that statement, she was, of course, admitting that God was right. That her heart still clung to these idolatries in a sense, that she had not fully broken away from them, she was still the 'baalah' of the house, and here she had her dead son in her bosom. What a picture of grief, brethren and sisters! What a picture of grief you have; a widow woman, all she's got in life is that boy, and she's got him clasped to her bosom, 'What have I done to thee, O thou man of God?' She didn't say,

'Curse Yahweh'; NO! God forbid; she didn't say that, she said, 'What have I done, It's my sin that you're calling to remembrance', and although her mind was wrought at this time, brethren and sisters, it's nonetheless, was cast in the mould of humility. And Elijah was equal to the occasion, and although we haven't got time to go into the details, note what he did!

'I want that boy', desperate situation! The woman's faith was about to be tried entirely, she was about to progress, brethren and sisters, to full realization of the fact of the case, and to blossom in the fullness of belief. Elijah takes that boy, and look what he did with him. He carried him up to the loft, the word means a 'height', he took him up. He put him on his own bed, now note the careful procedure. He lays the dead child on his own bed, and verse 21 says, 'He stretched himself upon the child three times. The Hebrew word literally means, as the margin indicates, 'he measured himself on the length of that child'. Now what was he doing? I don't think there's any question about what he was doing; he'd taken the boy up to God, he laid him on his own bed, and the prophet had got himself and had taken his own measurements, and laid himself and stretched himself along that child three times; three deliberate times he stretched himself along that child. Brethren and sisters, he was identifying himself with that boy, and he was going to call down the mercy of God, not upon that child but upon himself. HE WAS DEAD; Elijah had taken that boy's place, and he represented that boy in death. And the woman called him in question over the fact that the boy had died. 'What have I to do with thee, thou man of God?' She doubted now whether he was a man of God when the boy had died, but when he identified himself with the boy, the boy rose from the dead, and she said, 'now I know that by this thou art a man of God'. WHY? Because he stretched himself upon the child. It was Elijah that was raised; not in reality of course, the boy was raised, but it was Elijah in principle, because he had identified himself, 'and the soul of the child came'; it doesn't mean the soul came back from heaven, because it didn't go to heaven. The word is used in the sense of the word 'life'(nephesh) the life of that child came. Of course, if the son was in heaven, why was all the sudden stress? Why would Elijah bring him back anyway? That's a lot of nonsense; the boy was dead and the life entered back into him from God, and he arose and verse 24 says, The woman said to Elijah, 'Now by this I know that thou art a man of God', she doubted that in verse 18 because the boy had died, but now she was convinced that he was a man of God and she was convinced of something else! THAT THE WORD OF YAHWEH IN THY MOUTH IS TRUTH. Brethren and sisters, the Gentile woman was convinced by the resurrection of the dead, and the one who'd been raised was one in whom God had put His words in his mouth. You work that out! You work that out.

Deuteronomy chapter 18:18, 'I will put My words in thy mouth', and when He was on the cross, 'Come down; He saved others but He cannot save Himself' and they cast it into His teeth, brethren and sisters, and doubted whether He be the Son of God, but when He rose from the dead, God gave assurance unto all men that He rose from the dead, and those who believed it said, 'truly this was the Son of God'. And He rose from the dead because God had put His Words in mouth; He was the prophet of God, He was the man of God, He was the resurrected Christ, and that great fact went forward into all

the world to convince Gentiles that it was the truth. And there she said, 'Now by this'; by what? resurrection, I know that thou art a man of God, and that the Word of Yahweh, in your mouth is truth'. Is that 3 ½ years worth it, brethren and sisters? Was it worth it? My word it was worth it! And no doubt when the prophet left Zarephath and made his way down again into Israel to meet Ahab, he did so with a touch of sadness, because we can well and truly imagine, the wonderful friendship that had built up between the wild, lion-like prophet of Gilead and the widow woman of Zarephath.

It's a moving story, brethren and sisters, and the grand principle that I wish to radio to you from this story if nothing else is this, never despise any work of the truth. Look, brethren and sisters, never despise, never aspire to be great, because as great as we aspire to be, so we will be humbled by the mighty God of Israel. NEVER DESPISE, BRETHREN AND SISTERS, THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO OUT AND WORK FOR 3 ½ years if necessary, to bring people to salvation. And I believe that it was one of the greatest works that Elijah was called to do. And as the prophet made his way back again, as we will pick him up tomorrow, walking back into Israel to meet Ahab! how sick he must have been in heart, to think to himself, well, look, I'm coming into my own nation, and he knew, brethren and sisters, that he would not get the same response that he found over on the coast of the western side of Palestine. It's a marvellous story; let us absorb its lessons, brethren and sisters, and above all else, let us absorb this lesson, that no servant in the work of our Lord ever goes unrewarded, and if we can be of any assistance to any single individual, to get that person into the kingdom of God, then every effort we extend on that behalf, is worthwhile.